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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Monday, Febuary 7, 1944.

Subject: "CHICKEN IN THE POT." Information from the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Poultry specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture urge high egg production for every home flock. Feed supplies are less then last year, so they say the best use of feed is to give it to the pullets and hens that earn it by laying eggs.

Cull out the surplus roosters and overage hens. You can do either of two good things with these birds---cook them or can them. For canning, you cook them first to shorten cooking time, until they are partly tender. Then finish them in a steam pressure canner. Ask your State extension agent for directions recommended. Wherever you live be sure to use only a steam pressure canner for canning chicken or meats.

When it comes to cooking and serving the surplus roosters and old hens on the family dinner table, you have dozens of dishes to choose from, but our home economists tell us they all start with stewing or steaming the bird to make it tender. Stewing means several hours of slow simmering. Some of the juice and flavor will cook out of a stewed chicken, but you get back both when you make good use of the broth. So you not only get meat, but soup stock, from one of these unwanted birds. And in the case of a plump old hen, you often have some excellent chicken fat to use for baking, for making other gravies, for seasoning vegetables or stuffings, or for pan-frying.

You can stew or steam a rooster or an old hen either whole or cut up. Here are a couple of ways of preparing such chickens which may be a little different from the way you have always done it. You might call the first method "stewed and browned. "Put the fowl on a rack in a large kettle, fill the kettle half full

of lightly salted water, cover partly, and simmer 3 or 4 hours, or until the meat is tender. Simmer means simmer---barely bubbling; don't boil. Boiling toughens meat fibers. Turn the bird occasionally so it will cook evenly. Many homemakers like to cook a sliced onion or a clove of garlic with a stewed chicken, but if you are planning to use the fat for baking don't flavor with onion.

If you don't especially want extra broth, you can steam the bird in much the same way, on a rack, but keep the breast up, and the lid down tight. To keep a good circulation of steam, as the water boils away, add water only to the level of the racks. You can also shorten the time by cooking the bird in a steam pressure canner according to directions.

Whether you stew or steam the chicken, let the meat cool in the broth, breast down, for an hour or more before you finish preparing it, to reabsorb some of the juices. Then, if you wish, you can stuff it and brown it in a moderate oven. Mashed potato makes a good moist stuffing. Coat the stuffed bird with melted fat, sprinkle with salt and flour, and place it breast up on a rack in a shallow open pan to brown. Have the oven temperature moderate---about 350 degrees. Serve the browned chicken with a gravy made from the pan drippings and the broth, or with a savory tomato gravy.

A moment ago we mentioned two good ways of preparing these less tender chickens. That's one way-stewed and browned. The other way is fricasseed chicken with dumplings. For this dish you disjoint the chicken and then simmer it until the meat is tender. When the pieces are done, take them out of the broth and keep them hot in a warm, covered dish, while you make the gravy and the dumplings.

You should have 3 or 4 cups of broth in the kettle. Skim off the fat, and measure the broth. For each cup of skimmed broth mix one and half to two tablespoons of the fat with an equal quantity of flour. Blend the fat and flour with the hot broth until you have a smooth gravy. Now you are ready to make the dumplings. For dumplings, sift three-fourths of a cup of sifted flour with two and a

half teaspoons of baking powder and half a teaspoon of salt. Beat one egg without separating, add half a cup of milk, and mix with the dry ingredients. Drop this batter by spoonfuls into the boiling chicken gravy, cover the pan tightly, and cook for 15 minutes without once lifting the cover. That's the whole secret of good, light dumplings---don't peek, or the dumplings will be soggy! Put the chicken into the gravy and serve promptly. Of course these are only two special ways of serving the surplus roosters and old hens once you have made the meat tender. The cooked meat itself is the basis of any number of other good dishes. Many of them are the same as those you often make from leftover roast chicken. For example, you could serve creamed chicken in many ways---on toast, on biscuits as chicken shortcake, or waffles or rice or in a noodle ring, or as chicken pie. Or serve it in patty shells, with mushrooms, for chicken á la King. Or scallop the chicken with spaghetti, or use it for chicken salad, for jellied chicken, chicken loaf, risotto, soufflé, chop suey, or chicken gumbo.

When you have a fairly large bird and want to make it go as far as possible, divide the meat into two or three parts when you take it off the bones. Serve part one day cooked in one of these ways suggested by the home economists, and the next day, serve it some other way. Be sure to keep the part chilled that you are holding over, and use it all as promptly as possible.

Well, there you have a number of ideas for making good use of those chickens that get into the pot instead of remaining in the flock to "eat their heads off." They will yield you meat, broth, and fat, and make some of the most delicious dishes you can put on the table.

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